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FCC Proposes to Fight Spoofing

FCC Proposes to Fight Spoofing; Rosenworcel Wants Robocalls Enforcement Division

Commissioners voted 5-0 Thursday to launch a rulemaking on curbing spoofed robocalls, implementing as expected (see [1902120050](#)) part of Ray Baum's Act. Chairman Ajit Pai led with the item during a news conference. Commissioner Mike O'Rielly raised concerns the U.S. can't take action against some international spoofers. Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel questioned whether the FCC is doing enough to take enforcement actions against robocallers.

"While the expanded jurisdiction provided by the act won't solve all the challenges involved in bringing foreign criminals to justice, such as obtaining traceback-related subpoenas and obtaining the cooperation of countries with weaker legal institutions, the explicit provisions should at least help the commission cut through red tape in friendly nations," O'Rielly said. He said after the meeting he wasn't criticizing the item, "just highlighting how an illegal robocall can be incredibly difficult and there's only so much room [for us] to act."

Rosenworcel suggested a new Enforcement Bureau division targeting robocalls. "Why don't we organize ourselves?" she asked after the meeting. "We've only had a handful of enforcement actions in the last few years. Sure the dollar value has been high, but the impact isn't." There are 5 billion U.S. robocalls monthly, she said: "That's just crazy." New Commissioner Geoffrey Starks, formerly an EB staffer, said a separate division is "a good idea" since robocalls are a "scourge."

The draft NPRM proposed extending the reach of Truth in Caller ID Act rules to include "covered communications originating from outside the United States to recipients within" the U.S and asks about expanding the scope of covered communications to include texts. The rulemaking asks about definitions of the terms "text message," "text messaging service," "voice service," "caller identification information" and "caller identification service." It asks whether any other changes are necessary to caller ID rules.

The NPRM is "the latest step in our ongoing fight against the persistent problem of malicious caller ID spoofing," Pai said. "In the past year-and-a-half, we've adopted rules allowing phone companies to stop spoofed calls before

they even reach consumers' phones. We've imposed or proposed fines totaling more than \$237.5 million for illegal caller ID spoofing. We've held town halls around the country to educate older consumers about phone scams."

Commissioner Brendan Carr said the FCC should move quickly to approve rules: Americans "want to see action that eliminates these unwanted intrusions."

"I remember when it was Rachel from card member services I disliked most," Rosenworcel said. "Then it was the agent calling from the Internal Revenue Service with his final notice of an imminent lawsuit. But now it's the calls with spoofed numbers that look like family and friends but when I answer the line I get an automated voice offering me a cruise or debt relief or something else I did not ask for, do not want and do not need."

Spoofed calls are "particularly insidious," Starks said. In past days, people always answered their phones, he said. "Now, if you're anything like me and you don't recognize a number on your phone, you don't pick it up because it will almost always be a telemarketer."

The FCC released a report on its efforts to curb the robocall problem. "Until recently, there were limited effective ways to stem the tide of unwanted robocalls," the [report](#) said. "Over the last two years, the Commission has taken a new approach to the problem: stopping unwanted calls before they even reach consumers' phones."

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